

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Laboratory Outreach Communication System (LOCS) is forwarding this Health Alert concerning Multiple States Investigating a Large Outbreak of E. coli O157:H7 Infections for distribution to your members who may be testing or receiving specimens for E. coli O157:H7.

This multi-state outbreak was detected through PulseNet, a national molecular subtyping network for foodborne diseases surveillance that is a collaborative network of CDC, APHL, and other agencies. PulseNet uses standardized pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) methods so that scientists at public health laboratories can rapidly compare the PFGE patterns of bacteria isolated from ill persons and determine if they are similar. For more information concerning PulseNet and PFGE, see the CDC internet web site:

<http://www.cdc.gov/pulsenet/whatis.htm>

Please note the highlighted sections in the following alert.

Private and commercial laboratories with questions about this outbreak should contact their state public health laboratory (state laboratory listing located at http://www.aphl.org/about_aphl/member_laboratory_listing.cfm.)

Please disseminate this information via your most timely channels. This is important to assure that clinical laboratories have access to the most up-to-date information concerning this outbreak.

This is an official CDC Health Alert

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Multiple States Investigating a Large Outbreak of E. coli O157:H7 Infections

Public health officials in multiple states, with the assistance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, are investigating a large outbreak of E. coli O157:H7 infections. Thus far, 50 cases with isolates demonstrating pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) CDC PulseNet pattern number EXHX01.0124, as determined by Xba restriction enzyme DNA digestion, have been reported from CT (1), ID (3), IN (4), MI (3), OR (5), NM (2), UT (11), WI (20). Eight patients developed the hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) and one patient died. Most cases are recent: for those with known illness onset, the range of onset is 08/25/2006 to 09/03/2006. The outbreak is likely ongoing.

Preliminary findings from case interviews indicate that pre-packaged spinach is the most likely source. Additional investigation is necessary to determine the brand or brands of pre-packaged spinach involved. State and CDC investigators are working with FDA to quickly gather information to take action to protect the public. The FDA advises that consumers not eat bagged fresh spinach at this time.

The E. coli O157:H7 bacterium causes diarrhea that is often bloody and accompanied by abdominal cramps, but fever is absent or mild. The illness typically resolves within a week. However, some people, especially young children and the elderly, develop the hemolytic uremic syndrome, or HUS.

For more information concerning E. coli O157 infection, please see the CDC internet website: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenus/sub_ecoli.htm.

E. coli O157:H7 cases should be reported rapidly to the appropriate local and state public health officials, and isolates should be forwarded to state public health laboratories for rapid PFGE analysis. We request state officials report cases demonstrating the outbreak PFGE pattern to the Enteric Diseases Epidemiology Branch (Thai-An Nguyen (ten9@cdc.gov, 404-639-0776) ASAP.

NOTE: The CDC HAN web site has been relocated. The link to the new site location is: <http://www2a.cdc.gov/HAN/> If you maintain or contribute to a web site that links to the CDC HAN web site you should update the link. Also, to ensure the widest dissemination of this change it would be appreciated if you would distribute this notification as appropriate. Thank you!